

Signs of rabies in wild animals cannot be interpreted reliably; therefore, any wild animal that bites or scratches a person should be killed at once (without damage to the head) and the brain submitted for examination for rabies. If the brain is negative by fluorescent-antibody examination for rabies, the saliva can be assumed to contain no virus, and the bitten person need not be treated. Exotic animals, such as lions, tigers, monkeys and ferrets, that have been kept in captivity for extended periods of time are unlikely to be infected with rabies and can be isolated and observed for thirty days rather than killed if sufficient reason exists to keep the animal.

COLLECTION AND SUBMISSION OF ANIMAL SPECIMENS FOR RABIES TESTING

This information is supplied to facilitate the handling and provide the most accurate and rapid diagnosis of specimens submitted for rabies testing.

A. Listed below are animals that will NOT be accepted for rabies testing:

1. Cage raised pets will NOT be tested. These include all gerbils, guinea pigs, and hamsters.
2. Rabbits will NOT be tested unless a human has been exposed.
3. Bats with no exposure history, either animal or human, will NOT be tested. (See page 2 for the special case definition of bat exposure.)
4. Baby bats submitted with the mother will NOT be tested regardless of exposure history. Only the mother will be tested if an exposure has occurred.
5. Animals which have not had intimate exposure (bites, scratches, etc.) with humans or domestic animals will NOT be tested.

B. The following guidelines are offered to ensure proper testing of specimens for rabies:

1. Avoid damage to the brain by shooting or other traumatizing procedures.
2. Have a qualified person separate the suspect animal's head from the body immediately after death. Submit only the head of the animal. Bats can

and should be submitted whole. If only the brain is submitted rather than the entire head, be sure to include parts of the cerebellum, hippocampus, and brain stem. Specimens that do not include at least two of these three areas of the brain will be considered unsatisfactory due to a lack of sufficient material.

3. Chill the head immediately to between 32° and 45°F. **Do not freeze.**
4. If specimens are to be shipped, two containers must be used for packing:
 - a. The immediate (inner) container.
 - (1) Place one head in each inner container consisting of two heavy duty plastic bags.
 - (2) Attach an identification number or name to the inner container (this is especially important if more than one head is sent in a package).
 - (3) Place a completed Texas Department of Health Form No. G-9, Rabies Submission Form, or the information requested on this form (submitter's name, address and telephone number; source or owner, type of animal, identification of animal if multiple animals are sent, exposure history; and county where animal originated), in a waterproof bag. Include the identification number or name on the form.
 - (4) One form is required for each head submitted.
 - b. The shipping (outer) container.
 - (1) Place the inner container(s) in an insulated shipping container of adequate strength to withstand shipping conditions. A styrofoam container inside a cardboard box provides both strength and insulation.
 - (2) Add sufficient refrigerant so the head will remain chilled for a minimum of 48 hours. **DO NOT USE DRY ICE.** Gel packs or similar refrigerant should be used. If it is necessary to use ice, fill a plastic container two-thirds full with water

and freeze. If this is not possible and crushed ice must be used, the ice must be double bagged in heavy duty plastic bags.

- (3) Add packing material such as newspaper to absorb water in the event of leakage.
- (4) Place the G-9 form(s) on top of the packing materials, just inside the box.
- (5) Label the outside of the shipping container. The information must be legible and include:
 - (a) Name and address of the appropriate certified laboratory (listed below);
 - (b) The return address, name, and telephone of the shipper; and
 - (c) The following statements:

"RABIES SUSPECT, REFRIGERATE ON
ARRIVAL."

5. The following procedures are required for shipment by the shipper:
 - a. Ship by bus or other reliable carrier; use of the U.S. Postal Service is discouraged. Shipment by overnight courier is discouraged over the weekend. Services such as Federal Express and UPS do NOT deliver to the laboratory over the weekend.
 - b. Obtain a shipment receipt and retain this receipt.
 - c. At the time of the shipment, telephone the appropriate laboratory and notify them of the shipment.
 - d. Provide the return postage (in the form of stamps) if return of the shipping container is desired.

6. The certified laboratories in Texas are:

AUSTIN

Bureau of Laboratories
Texas Department of Health
1100 West 49th Street
Austin, Texas 78756
Telephone notification line: 1-800-252-8163
Local telephone: 512-458-7598

EL PASO

Laboratory
El Paso City-County Health Department
222 South Campbell
El Paso, Texas 79901
Telephone: 915-543-3536

HOUSTON

Laboratory
Houston City Health Department
1115 South Braeswood
Houston, Texas 77030
Telephone: 713-558-3467 or 713-558-3468

SAN ANTONIO

Laboratory
San Antonio Metropolitan Health District
332 West Commerce
San Antonio, Texas 78205
Telephone: 210-207-8819